

Senior and Long-Term Care Funding Request

EXHIBIT 22
DATE Jan 27, 09
HB 2

Madame chair, members of the committee.

My name is Paul Travitz. I am the Executive Director of the Council on Aging in Ravalli County. As you probably know, Ravalli County is one of Montana's fastest growing counties. According to US census projections, the population of seniors in Ravalli County is projected to increase 225% by the year 2030. According to the 2007 census, there are 11,516 seniors 60 and older living in Ravalli County. With the governor's proposed budget, the allotment for Ravalli County is about \$6.56 per senior per year. That equates to about 23 of these Meals on Wheels containers.....empty. The Council averages about 51 meals a day, full of food. You will notice the advertising we sell on the film of these containers to help defray the cost of them.

Now, of course, every senior in Ravalli County does not need or receive Meals on Wheels, just the homebound, the frail, the most nutritionally-at-risk seniors with whom we deal. Ravalli County has a senior poverty rate of over 20%, which is where our Commodity Surplus food program helps, providing low-income seniors with two crates of food every other month. Our Senior Centers round out our nutrition program by providing hot noon lunches throughout the county. With the additional funding we received in the last budget, the Council has started three new senior meal sites in the communities of Florence, Darby, and Sula. Along with that additional funding, the Council provided \$30,000 to our three senior centers for building and grounds improvement and infrastructure upgrades.

I mentioned earlier about the projected senior population growth of our county, 225%. In order to cope with growth like that, it takes planning, innovation, and investment. I would like to talk briefly about some of the things the Council on Aging is doing to prepare for this growth. Just last month the Council finalized the donation of 4 acres of land to the Ravalli County Economic Development Authority to build a 10,000 sq-ft business incubator to bring hi-tech/bio-tech entrepreneurs and jobs to Ravalli County.

Housing for seniors is a major concern throughout Montana. I'm proud to say that the Council on Aging, in cooperation with the Senior Cooperative Foundation and Bradford Development of Mankato, Minnesota, is moving forward with the first Senior Housing Cooperative in the State of Montana. This type of senior housing is common in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota and could bring an affordable housing alternative to large and small communities throughout the state. This is an 8 to 10 million dollar project that allows seniors 55 and older to have all the benefits of home ownership, including limited equity gain, itemized deductions for property taxes and mortgage interest, without the burdens of outside home maintenance, repair, and upkeep. This project which will be built on the Council on Aging campus will be close to senior services, including transportation services through BitterRoot Bus, Meals on Wheels, Information and Assistance programs and more.

Preparation for the large increases in senior population in Montana takes forethought, planning, and innovation, but mainly it takes adequate funding, funding to build and prepare for the future. I respectfully ask the committee to provide the funding needed to the aging service network to fulfill our mission of providing the opportunity for independence.



MARCUS DALY HOME CARE

EXHIBIT 22
DATE 1-27-09
HB 2

January 19, 2009

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Health & Human Services Subcommittee,

The services and support provided by the Council on Aging programs in Montana are vital to our seniors' ability to maintain their independence and dignity. Without adequate support our elderly will be seeking more costly services through emergency rooms, hospitals, and nursing homes.

Council on Aging programs assist in providing for the essential needs of our fragile elderly:

- * Nutritional needs through Meals on Wheels, congregate meals at Senior Centers, and commodities;
- * Transportation services to assist with medical appointments and shopping;
- * Homemaker services to maintain a livable environment;
- * Assistance & support with signing up for medication plans, filing taxes, conversion to digital TV, arranging legal guidance, etc.
- * Loan closet for Durable Medical Equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, etc.
- * Elderly Ombudsman services;
- * And a key resource for elderly to contact for direction and referral for an unlimited variety of questions or issues.

Reducing funding now will only increase the cost to the system over time. We must ensure these programs have the financial support they need to continue to provide the support needed by our growing elderly population. The economic environment results in an increased need for those elderly on fixed or decreasing incomes; now is not the time to reduce funding. Funding should be increasing as our elderly population increases and the economy worsens the financial status of those on fixed or decreasing incomes.

Please ensure that Aging Services across the state continue to receive the financial support they need to provide essential services to our fragile elderly.

Sincerely,

Jane Hron
Director



MARCUS DALY HOME CARE

EXHIBIT 22
DATE 1-27-09
HB 2

January 21, 2009

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Health & Human Services Subcommittee:

The Council on Aging program provides for many needs of our elderly. Such needs as:

- Wood for winter months;
- Telephone reassurance;
- Reverse Annuity Mortgage;
- Nutritional needs through the Meals on Wheels program, traveling from Florence to Darby;
- Congregate meals at 4 sites;
- Elderly Ombudsman services;
- Legal Services;
- Transportation services for medical appointments and shopping;
- Loan Closet for Durable Medical Equipment;
- Homemaker services;
- Assistance and support with signing up for medication plans, filing taxes, arranging legal support/guidance, etc.

Reducing the funding from this program will only increase the costs to the system over time. We need to ensure that these programs have the financial support they need to continue to provide the support needed by our ever growing elderly population. How can we afford to take away what little our elderly have?

Please ensure that Council on Aging programs across the state continues to receive the financial support they need to provide essential services to our fragile elderly.

Sincerely,

Sherry L. Price
Secretary/Receptionist
Marcus Daly Home Care & Hospice

PROPOSER OF: Increased Medicaid Waiver Slots, Increased Wages for Direct Care Workers, and Increased Provider Reimbursement Rates.

22
DATE Jan 27, 09

My name is Joanne Verwolf from Corvallis, Montana. For the past twelve years I have held the position of Ravalli County Coordinator with Summit Independent Living Center. I strongly urge you to increase the number of Medicaid "waiver slots", as it provides consumer choice, provides an individual the dignity, comfort, and peace of mind to be cared for in their own home, or in the least restrictive setting as possible, such as an assisted living facility, and is more cost effective than nursing home care.

Everyone has the right to go to a nursing home, whether or not they have the ability to pay, as Medicaid will cover the cost. Medicaid recipients should have the same right to make another choice, actually a less expensive choice, such as an assisted living facility or having limited personal care in their own home. With the state of the economy and the increase in the number of Medicaid recipients, it becomes absolutely critical that Medicaid dollars be spent more efficiently and effectively. Statistical information confirms that Medicaid Waiver is a less expensive means by which to care for those who are at nursing home level of care. When a waiver slot is not available, individuals are often left with no other option than to enter a nursing home. This is not only more expensive for the taxpayers, but displaces individuals from the comforts of their own home. Isn't it mandated that individuals with disabilities have the right to be placed in the least restrictive setting as possible? Yes, but they often don't have that choice.

Over the years, I've witnessed many individuals on the "waiting list" for a Medicaid waiver slot that had no other choice than to enter a nursing home, as they could not "wait" any longer. When an individual reaches nursing home level of care, they need the care at that moment, not months and months later. This past year one consumer on the "waiting list" was being cared for at home by family members, who were putting their own health at risk while caring for their loved one. This individual was admitted to the Medicaid Waiver program the day before he passed away. No one should have to wait that long. Family members often choose to care for their loved ones at home, even without the help, yet the stress and labor intensive care will eventually take its toll on the family, to the point they themselves may need medical care and Medicaid. Preventive and immediate care is far less expensive in the long run.

On a personal note, I cared for my mother in my home for six years before she passed away in July of 2006. She was comfortable, well cared for, and it was truly a blessing to have her where she wanted to be... at home. During this six year period, personal care attendants cared for her while I worked. She was fortunate to be on the Medicaid Waiver program, which enabled her to return home after a hospital stay and covered the cost of 40 hours/week personal care, yet she received 24-hour care with additional family support. It is easy to measure the savings to taxpayers, but I can honestly tell you it was worth more than money could ever buy to have the opportunity to have my loved one with me to the end. She passed away at home with the dignity and comfort that should be afforded each and every one of us. My dear mother was a true pioneer; raised on a Montana homestead, lived, worked, and raised her family here, volunteered in her community, and made many contributions to society. Until she outlived her hard earned savings and needed Medicaid for her long term care, she never once collected any type of "welfare".

I ask you to stretch the Medicaid dollars by voting for an increase in the number of waiver slots, increase the wages of those who provide the actual care, and increase provider reimbursement rates. We truly need to care for those who need it, whether it be a senior or a person with a disability, and each should have the opportunity to choose how that care be administered, whether at home, assisted living facility, or a nursing home. Ask yourself, would you want that choice?

Thank you,

Joanne Verwolf
1116 Willow Creek Rd, Corvallis, MT 59828

EXHIBIT
DATE

#20

EXHIBIT 22
DATE Jan 27, 09
HB 2

PROPONENT OF: INCREASED MEDICAID WAIVER SLOTS,
INCREASED WAGES FOR DIRECT CARE GIVERS &
INCREASED REIMBURSEMENT RATES FOR PROVIDERS.

I Am Serenity from Hamilton, Montana with five years experience working in a nursing home and assisted living center and now working as an advocate for people with disabilities at Summit Independent Living Center. I strongly urge you to increase the number of Medicaid "waiver slots" and allow the elderly and those with disabilities a greater choice in their health care.

While working in the nursing home/assisted living center, I witnessed many individuals who were forced to stay in the nursing home because there were no "waiver slots." They were put on the wait list and had to stay in the nursing home until a slot became available, which could be months or never. These individuals did not require full nursing home care and could be maintained less expensively in their home or in the assisted living center.

Another story I want to share with you is that of a disabled single father of a 9 year-old on SSI and Medicaid who needed a Medicaid "waiver slot" in order to obtain "nursing home type services" in his home. I helped him apply and he was put on the wait list. Now comes the other part of this Medicaid waiver slot tragedy. In order to get to the top of the wait list, you have to "need it more" than the next "needy" person in line. So the entire time my client was on the wait list, he was not getting the vital case management services he needed and the result was, he attempted suicide. And was immediately put on top of the list!

Medicaid waiver slots cost less in the short term and long term. If this client had had a slot, we wouldn't have needed to pay for him to live in a 30-day specialized treatment facility because he couldn't get the health care he needed. Instead, we would be paying to keep him home and a productive member of society.

Medicaid waiver slots work because they offer a less expensive alternative to nursing homes and give the elderly and disabled options they don't currently have. I ask you to vote in favor of increasing the number of waiver slots and to increasing the wages of those who provide the actual care and their reimbursement rates.

Thank you,

I Am Serenity
773 Kindness Way
Hamilton, MT 59840
(406) 961-1704

1/20

Dear Legislative committees,

I am writing this letter as the President of the Stearnville Senior Center, to "please" consider giving the Council of Aging, which we are a part of, a chance at getting help from you in this year, like it was given the last 2 yrs. The money allotted to each center really benefitted our center.

It was used to put in a new hot water heater that is fast recovery, & is energy efficient for our use every day. It was also used to add on a bigger pantry & bring the freezers up out of the basement to help our cooks, going up & down, for their health safety. We used it for carpeting & painting since our center is aging as we are. Some windows had to be replaced.

We rent the kitchen to the C.O.A. to pay for our wonderful meals. They (serve) several all our community of Seniors Citizens' meals on wheels" every day. Our aging population has grown & so many are not able to get to the center to eat. We have a membership of over 200 in our area alone.

Our cooks use the healthy meals that keep us healthy & happy through these hard times of the economy.

I've been president for over 6 yrs & am 81 yrs old but still can do my job of loving & helping each & every

Senior, who come to our center for
food & fellowship.

Come visit our home & enjoy a meal
with us & you'll understand why
we could use your help this year.
Don't leave this program short, please
"Thank you" & God bless you for
reading this letter. I mean every word
of it.

Sincerely
Betty "B.J." Towell
President

EXHIBIT 22
DATE 2-27-07
HB 2

Hamilton Packing Co Inc.
692 Hwy 93 N
Hamilton, MT 59840-9477
406-961-3861

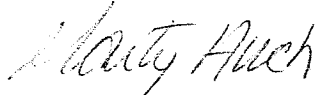
In Re: Support for Funding for Aging Services

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee:

In the past two years since the Council on Aging began their "Buy Local Beef" policy, Hamilton Pac has butchered eight cows from local ranchers for the Council. I am writing this letter to emphasize how funding for the senior meal sites and Meals on Wheels programs has a positive impact for local suppliers, ranchers, and businesses. In the past year when fuel prices skyrocketed, it brought home the importance of supporting a local food system that takes advantage of the quality products grown, raised, and processed right here in Montana.

I request your support of funding for nutrition and other service provided by Montana's Aging Services.

Sincerely,



Marty Auch
President
Hamilton Packing Co Inc.

Mary Riley, MSW, LCSW
495 El Capitan Loop
Stevensville, Montana 59870

22
EXHIBIT 22
DATE 1-27-09
HB 2

1/23/09

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Health & Human Services Subcommittee.

I am a licensed clinical social worker working in a Home Health setting at Marcus Daly Hospital in Hamilton. The primary populations that we serve in our program are the frail elderly. In my work with this population I have found that the numerous services which are provided by the dedicated people at the Council on Aging are sometimes literally a life saver for the elderly. Their telephone reassurance program can literally assist a person to be able remain in their home. Their meals on wheels program make sure that the elderly can have at least one nutritious meal a day. Their commodities program makes sure that this population has sufficient food in the home and it is delivered as in many cases this population cannot get out of the home get these food items. The value of the assistance that the employees of the Council on Aging provide our elderly in making sure that they have the right Medicare D provider cannot be measured. These are just a few of the services provided by the Council on Aging. Reducing funding will once again target an already very needy and frail population to become even more isolated, destitute and more likely to increase the need of this population to require even more medical and other services.

As you probably already know the elderly population here in Ravalli County has been steadily growing. At this time in our great nation it is not in the best interest of all of us to decrease the funding to this population. I would strongly encourage this committee to look at INCREASING the funding to our elderly.

In closing I would ask you to reconsider and not implement any cuts to the Council on Aging programs throughout our state.

Respectfully,

Mary Riley, MSW, LCSW

Exhibit 22

**This exhibit is 3-dimensional item
sealed paper meal container.**

**The original exhibit is on file at
the Montana Historical Society and
may be viewed there**

**Montana Historical Society
Archives, 225 N. Roberts, Helena,
MT 59620-1201
Phone (406) 444-4774.**



**-FREE Delivery-
363-3611**

211 Main Street • Hamilton, Montana 59840

**VALLEY
VIEW**



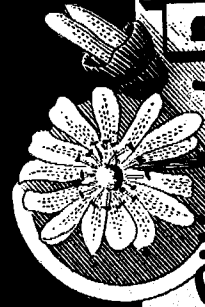
ESTATES

**Health Care Center
363-1144**

225 North 8th Street • Hamilton, MT 59840

EXHIBIT 22
DATE 1/27/09
HD 2

THESE BUSINESSES SUPPORT THE MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAM



**WE ACCEPT ALL INSURANCE AND
MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION PLANS**



**-FREE Delivery-
363-3611**

211 Main Street • Hamilton, Montana 59840

**VALLEY
VIEW**

